

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OUR APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS IS BROKEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, today, the House Republican leadership is clearing up a mess they made three weeks ago.

On November 20, 2004, House Republicans sent to the floor another unwieldy omnibus spending bill, 2 months late and billions of dollars short for America's education, health care and homeland security needs. It was not until the last moment that we discovered that Republicans had slipped in a hidden provision that would have let Congress read the tax returns of any individual American taxpayer and reveal the contents to the public, with no penalties for committing such a flagrant violation of privacy.

Republicans quickly and vocally distanced themselves from this provision, and I have no doubt that my Republican colleagues were as ashamed as I was that this provision almost became law. But where the Republican leadership continues to fail is by claiming this is an isolated mistake. The ugly truth is that it is a symptom of a legislative process that is broken.

In a democracy, the legislative process relies on free and open exchange of ideas. After the final rollcall, there are winners and there are losers, but the system works because all sides know that the issues were debated openly, and the results were reached fairly.

The process Congress has used to fund our government for the past 3 years falls short of this ideal. In fact, it does not even come close. A few Republican leaders work day and night, behind closed doors, to prepare a document thousands of pages long. Then, the report is filed in the middle of the night, and Members are asked to vote on it the following morning. The people's elected representatives are forced to cast votes on a bill that funds half of the Federal Government, yet few people have actually read it.

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The result is inevitable: bad law. Sometimes it is dramatically bad, like the sneak-and-peek tax provision in this year's bill. But more often it is boringly bad: billions wasted on the wrong priorities, monies that could go to education, health care, or Homeland Security instead going to someone's pet boondoggle. But just because it is boring does not make it any better.

Mr. Speaker, we owe the American taxpayer better accountability of the

money they send to us. As the President is fond of saying, it is not our money. It belongs to the taxpayers. And the taxpayers are right to demand better government policy.

I urge the Speaker to uphold the House's own rules on conference reports. Give us a chance to read bills before we have to vote on them, and give the American people a chance to have a free and open debate on how their taxpayer dollars are spent.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of medical reasons.

Mr. BACA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of illness.

Mr. KIND (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of weather and travel delays.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. BOEHLERT (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. WOLF (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of knee surgery.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BROWN of Ohio) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KIND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STUPAK, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. KING of Iowa) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. WHITFIELD, for 5 minutes, today and December 7.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and December 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Mr. KING of Iowa, for 5 minutes, today.

HOUSE BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT

The President notified the Clerk of the House that on the following dates

he had approved and signed bills and joint resolutions of the House of the following titles:

September 24, 2004:

H.R. 361. An Act to designate certain conduct by sports agents relating to the signing of contracts with student athletes as unfair and deceptive acts or practices to be regulated by the Federal Trade Commission.

H.R. 3908. An Act to provide for the conveyance of the real property located at 1081 West Main Street, in Ravenna, Ohio.

H.R. 5008. An Act to provide an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.

September 30, 2004:

H.R. 5149. An Act to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant program through March 31, 2005, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5183. An Act to provide an extension of highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a law reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

H.J. Res. 107. Joint Resolution making continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2005, and for other purposes.

October 4, 2004:

H.R. 1308. An Act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax relief for working families, and for other purposes.

October 5, 2004:

H.R. 265. An Act to provide for an adjustment of the boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1521. An Act to provide for additional lands to be included within the boundary of the Johnstown Flood National Memorial in the State of Pennsylvania, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1616. An Act to authorize the exchange of certain lands within the Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site for lands owned by the City of Atlanta, Georgia, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1648. An Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain water distribution systems of the Cachuma Project, California, to the Carpinteria Valley Water District and the Montecito Water District.

H.R. 1658. An Act to amend the Railroad Right-of-Way Conveyance Validation Act to validate additional conveyances of certain lands in the State of California that form part of the right-of-way granted by the United States to facilitate the construction of the transcontinental railway, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1732. An Act to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the Williamson County, Texas, Water Recycling and Reuse Project, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2696. An Act to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West.

H.R. 3209. An Act to amend the Reclamation Project Authorization Act of 1972 to clarify the acreage for which the North Loup division is authorized to provide irrigation water under the Missouri River Basin project.

H.R. 3249. An Act to extend the term of the Forest Counties Payments Committee.

H.R. 3389. An Act to amend the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 to permit Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards to be made to nonprofit organizations.